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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1633  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN 5620  
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SUBJECT: BIOS ON NEW CHILEAN CABINET MEMBERS

REF: SANTIAGO 00021

Classified By: Economic and Political Counselor Juan Alsace. Reasons 1  
.4 (b. and d.)

¶1. (SBU) Following is biographic information on the six new members of President Bachelet's cabinet, who were announced and sworn in January 8, 2008, as part of Bachelet's third cabinet shuffle (reftel). This message also includes biographic information on Francisco Vidal, who replaced Ricardo Lagos Weber as Minister/Spokesman on December 6, 2007.

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Minister of Interior -- Edmundo Perez Yoma  
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¶2. (C) Perez Yoma (68) is a businessman and veteran Christian Democratic Party activist. Most recently he sat on the board of Chilean National Television. Perez has served as president and director of several firms in the energy, transportation, and construction sectors. Perez Yoma was Defense Minister during Frei Ruiz-Tagle's presidency (1994-1998), where he played a major role in civil-military relations. According to Embassy reporting at the time, Perez Yoma established and maintained positive relations with Pinochet and the Armed Forces. He also welcomed contact with the U.S., and supported sending Chilean military officers to the U.S. for education and training. Perez Yoma has also served as Ambassador to Argentina and as Consul General in Bolivia. He is reportedly close to former President Frei and current DC party president Soledad Alvear. His father was assassinated by leftist terrorists in 1973, and served as Interior Minister under Eduardo Frei Montalva. Perez Yoma holds degrees in engineering from the University of Chile and in economics from the University of Washington. Perez Yoma speaks fluent English.

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Minister Secretary General of Government -- Francisco Vidal  
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¶3. (SBU) Vidal (54) was named Secretary General of Government on December 6, 2007, replacing former spokesman Ricardo Lagos Weber. Vidal is a third-time minister, previously serving under former President Lagos as Minister of Interior (2005) and Secretary General of Government (2003-2005). He is extremely close to former President Lagos and reportedly enjoys positive relations with President Bachelet. His academic and NGO positions include Dean of the Economic

Science and Administrative faculty of Universidad Central (1998-1999) and Executive Director of Chile 21 Foundation (1994-2000). A member of the PPD, Vidal served as the party's vice-president from 1996 to 2000. Vidal is a professor of history and geography with a master's degree in history from the University of Chile. Vidal does not speak English.

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Minister of Public Works -- Sergio Bitar  
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14. (SBU) Bitar (67) most recently was president of the center-left Party for Democracy (PPD). His political career includes Minister of Mining under Salvador Allende (1973), Senator (1994-2002), and Minister of Education under Lagos (2001-2006) - a position from which he resigned in order to head Bachelet's presidential campaign. Bitar is a long-time Embassy contact. As Education Minister, he supported educational exchange programs with the U.S. Exiled in the United States and Venezuela during the military government (1974-84), Bitar maintains ties to the U.S and has family there. Bitar received a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University in 1971. He returned to Harvard as a visiting researcher (1975-76) and also joined the Wilson Center for International Scholars from 1982 to 1983. He is a member of the Inter-American Dialogue and speaks English fluently.

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Minister of Economy -- Hugo Lavados  
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15. (SBU) Lavados (58) is former Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Export Promotion Office (ProChile) - a position to which he was appointed by former President Lagos in 2003. A Christian Democrat, Lavados is an economist with a broad academic and research background. He was the Stocks and Insurance Superintendent, and one of the five members of the Chilean Antimonopoly Commission during President Aylwin's administration (1990-1994). Lavados is generally supportive of free trade. He has served as a consultant for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), for Unicef, Inter-american Development Bank, and the World Bank. He has son who is a lawyer specializing in IPR. He has a master's degree in Economics from Boston University. Lavados speaks fluent English.

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Minister of Mining -- Santiago Gonzalez  
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16. (SBU) Gonzalez (51) is a member of the Radical Social Democratic Party (PRSD) and a Mason. He most recently served as general manager of Polla, a government-run lottery. He also sat on the board of the National Mining Company (ENAMI) as one of three presidential representatives. Previously, Gonzalez was general manager of the Metropolitan Corporation for Sanitary Works (EMOS). He is the son of former PRSD Senator Carlos Gonzalez Marquez who was regional superintendent for Valparaiso under Salvador Allende and ambassador to Honduras during Lagos' presidency.

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Minister of Agriculture -- Marigen Hornkohl  
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17. (SBU) Hornkohl (54) served as Chile's ambassador to Germany before being tapped. She served as Undersecretary for Social Programs (2000-2003) and Undersecretary of Education (2003-2005) under Lagos. Hornkohl is reportedly a close friend of DC president Soledad Alvear: she was her communications advisor when Alvear served as Minister of Justice, and later ran Alvear's presidential campaign. When Alvear pulled out of the presidential race, Hornkohl became Lagos' Education Minister after Sergio Bitar stepped down to lead Bachelet's campaign. Reportedly, Hornkohl has no previous experience in agricultural issues. Hornkohl

graduated from the University of Chile with a degree in social work, and later studied history at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

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Minister of Planning -- Paula Quintana  
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18. (U) Quintana most recently served as Undersecretary of Culture. She previously served as the Regional Secretary for Planning in Valparaiso, and has held other regional positions in the planning sector. Quintana has acted as a private consultant and as an advisor to the Undersecretary of Planning on social policy with an emphasis on indigenous issues. A Socialist Party (PS) activist, Quintana is a sociologist with a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chile.  
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